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The Highlander

Thursday Feb 5 2026 | Issue 725

INSIDE: MCFADDEN'S MEAT MARKET EXPANDING PAGE 11

FREE

Slippery situation
Mia Prkusic hangs in the balance while climbing a naturally-formed ice wall at Haliburton Forest Feb 1. See more on page 17.
Photo by Steven Sherwood.

Minden gets outdoor ed centre

By Mike Baker

Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) has announced a new $1.2 million outdoor education and Indigenous centre will be built in Minden, with an opening planned for spring 2027.

Director of Education Wes Hahn said the 3,000 sq. ft. facility will be constructed on a 90-acre parcel the school board owns connecting to Archie Stouffer Elementary School (ASES). The build has been approved by the Ministry of Education, though Hahn confirmed TLDSB is footing the bill.

"We've got a capital reserve close to $1.2 million and that's what we've budgeted to build this facility," Hahn said. "We've managed our money really well recently and are in a great financial position to do this… this money is not coming from the classroom side, we couldn't tap into this to buy more textbooks, it's strictly to build new things or put additions onto existing buildings."

Hahn said Minden was the "perfect" spot

Continued **'School'** on page 2

Sports Hall of Fame adding 13 new members

By Mike Baker

A third class of inductees for the Haliburton Highlands Sports Hall of Fame has been unveiled, with five athletes, four community builders and two historic teams to be recognized at a summer ceremony in Haliburton.

Hockey players Jonathan Bishop, Chris Petrow and Julia Fedeski, curler Paul Madden and all-rounder Wendy Bolt will join 17 previously inducted athletes into the hall.

The Bishop family, Helen and Neil Burk and Jane Symons are being recognized for their commitment and contributions to excellence, helping to promote their chosen sports in the Highlands. Their additions will take the builders wing to 11, said Hall of Fame spokesperson Roger Trull.

The Minden Rockcliffe Hustlers fastpitch softball team and 1978-79 Hal High Redmen football team will add to the four inductees in the teams category, while the Boshkung Skiers and Haliburton County ladies softball league are up for outstanding achievement awards.

"This year's class is a little bigger than we anticipated, but we're really happy with where we landed – every single person included is worthy of being in the Hall of Fame," Trull said.

Including this year's nominees, the Hall of Fame now boasts 42 members. Following its launch in 2021, Trull feels welcoming new classes every other year has worked well so far.

The ceremony will be held at A.J. LaRue Arena May 23, with each inductee having panels added to physical hall locations in Minden and Haliburton.

Continued **'Induction'** on page 19

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Highlander news

A rendering of the new outdoor education and Indigenous centre TLDSB is proposing for Minden. *Courtesy of TLDSB.*

School board to open facility for spring 2027

Continued from page 1

given its central location in the district, the availability and suitability of the land, and prominence of several outdoor-type educational programs and businesses in the County.

Plans for the facility have been in place for about a year, though Hahn said its origins date back to 2020 when he joined TLDSB.

"This project has been driven by our [board of] trustees. They have wanted to build an outdoor education centre for some time," Hahn said.

TLDSB is proposing a 2,000 sq. ft. main structure with a wraparound porch and deck, to be used for large gatherings, presentations and Indigenous circles. There will be a kitchenette, washroom facilities and other educational spaces for instruction.

Outside, Hahn said there will be a fire pit with a gazebo, several kilometres of trails and space for overnight camping. He confirmed the facility would operate as a day program, with teachers board-wide able to book excursions for students from kindergarten to Grade 12. He said this is considered an enhancement to TLDSB and will not replace existing outdoors programming, such as the annual Grade 6 overnight trip to Camp Muskoka.

Hahn estimates the building will create six-to-10 jobs in the community, from custodians, to consultants, outdoor educators and program developers. Hahn said the board already has leads on instructional hires, with programming centering on leadership and team building, environmental learning, physical education, and unique regional activities, such as collecting maple sap, studying animal tracks and exploring the Canadian Shield.

"This is going to be a great way for our students to learn – we've seen firsthand how some kids who don't necessarily gravitate to everything we do in a classroom light up and come to life when they're outside," Hahn said.

Indigenous component 'key' to project

Hahn noted TLDSB will work with Indigenous partners in the region to develop programming rooted in respect for the land and its history.

Larry O'Connor, an Odawa Anishinaabe knowledge holder and member of the Sheshegwaning First Nation, said he's been a part of conversations on this facility for several months and think it's an "exciting project" for the community.

"This is something we've been pushing for in schools for some time. We preach that the best classroom is on the land as far as Indigenous teachings go… we will now have a dedicated space for the students to learn from," O'Connor said.

This week, he held several virtual classes with TLDSB students about beading, though said, "it's so much better if you can do this in-person. I can see leading classes about Indigenous medicines, going for a walk on the trails and showing students what these things are and how they help."

He encouraged TLDSB to meet with Indigenous elders from nearby First Nations for a broader discussion on programming.

Locals excited

Minden parent Robin Dillane, who has a son in Grade 7 at ASES, believes this new facility will open doors for many people in the community, not just students.

"The most exciting thing about this for me is the investment in the community. For a facility of this size, this will bring much-needed good, stable jobs to the area," Dillane said. "I'm exciting to hear they're planning to open in spring 2027 – my son will still be at ASES so can get in on the ground floor and experience all the positives this will bring."

Mayor Bob Carter echoed those words, saying this was an exciting announcement.

"This is something that will help put Minden on the map," Carter said.

With the school board aiming for a quick turnaround, wanting to welcome students at the site within 14 months, Carter said that "doesn't leave much time" for getting permits approved. Hahn said TLDSB is hoping to break ground this spring and have exterior construction wrapped by November, leaving interior work to be done through winter.

"We're excited about the project and excited to work with the school board, but we need conversations… on site plan, water and sewer connections… to start as soon as possible," Carter said.

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Highlander news

SBES and JDH parent councils are hosting an upcoming ‘pasta for playground’ fundraiser. *Photo by Lisa Gervais*.

Building a playground one noodle at a time

By Lisa Gervais

School councils at Stuart Baker and J.D. Hodgson elementary schools in Haliburton are going public with their plans to help fundraise for a new shared playground structure.

SBES council chair Lauren Adelson, whose sons, Henry, 7, and Cooper, 5, attend SBES said the existing equipment is not expected to last much longer and desperately needs replacing.

To that end, the school councils are hosting a spaghetti night fundraiser Feb. 26 and are looking for community support.

She said under the school fundraising guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education; schools are required to fundraise for the dismantling, purchase, installation and maintenance of playgrounds.

Adelson joined parent council when Henry started Junior Kindergarten. This is her third year on council, and first as chair. It’s been their main fundraiser for a few years now, for example, selling poinsettias and bags of soup mix, but members have realized they need to do more.

“Playground equipment is more expensive than you might think. The cost of the newly-designed school yard has been estimated at $300,000, including removal of the existing structures, site preparation, installation, and purchase of inclusive and accessible equipment.”

She said previous SBES principal Lauren Alloway and JDH principal David Waito had presented a rough plan to parent councils in the past. They said the project would be three phases: the first, estimated at $200,000, for a Grade 1 to 8 play structure; the second phase for a kindergarten climbing structure; and the third for soccer nets for soccer fields. They are fundraising for the first phase.

The first big community fundraising event – Pasta for Playground – which they hope to hold annually, will be held at Haliburton Highlands Secondary School cafeteria, with Darla Searle’s hospitality class preparing the meal. Lions Club members are lending a hand. There will also be music, games, a silent auction, and raffle.

“We are reaching out to the community for donations to help facilitate this exciting event that will hopefully be a new way for our community to gather and enjoy an evening together. We are collecting auction and raffle items, food, disposable plates, cutlery, napkins and cups. Every little bit helps. If you own a local business, we are welcoming gift cards, services and products for our auction and raffle.

“Playing outside is a critical part of our children’s physical, social and emotional development. It promotes curiosity, creativity and critical thinking. Studies have found that children who spend more time playing outdoors have improved learning outcomes and more positive behavior,” Adelson said on behalf of parent council representatives.

Adelson added people can donate money on their website and through Canada Helps or drop a cheque at the schools.

People can email SBES.school.council@gmail.com or contact Adelson at 705-854-0054.

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Highlander news

Council takes old fire hall step further

By Lisa Gervais

Minden Hills residents are getting an organics program in 2026 after three councillors voted in favour of the initiative during what mayor Bob Carter termed an "historic meeting" Jan. 29.

Carter has championed the program since working with staff to strike a first draft of the mayor's budget under the Strong Mayors Act. He was backed by deputy mayor Lisa Schell and coun. Pam Sayne in getting it approved.

Votes to override mayoral vetoes required a two-thirds, or 5-2, majority to pass. Councillors Tammy McKelvey, Ivan Ingram, Shirley Johannessen, and Bob Sisson voted against, but their four 'nays' fell one short of killing the enterprise.

Manager of waste facilities, Chelsea Cosh, told council during January budget talks the program would help save space at the Scotch Line landfill. She said studies had shown 30-40 per cent of household waste is comprised of organic material.

"Having a program would allow us to divert that material from the landfill and make use of a successful organics program." She said it would require three waste containers, known as Moloks.

During last week's meeting, Carter reiterated he thought the program was sound from an environmental and fiscal perspective. He said it was important to divert material from the landfill to lengthen its lifespan. He added that, at $39,000, it was a lot cheaper than having to one day haul material out of the municipality if the landfill is full.

Deputy mayor Lisa Schell was the swing vote in many of the budget decisions. *Photo by Lisa Gervais.*

McKelvey agreed it was a good project. However, she wanted to hold off at least a year since there is already a "massive project" – more than $1 million for a transfer station – underway at Scotch Line. Sayne argued if they put it off, the cost would only rise.

Cosh said details would be worked out now that the program is approved.A majority of councillors, however, were successful in overriding Carter's decision to remove $50,000 from the budget to do something with the old fire hall downtown. The override vote was 5-2 (Sayne voted with Carter).

Carter argued there was a larger discussion underway with downtown businesses about what to do with the area around the old fire hall and he thought it prudent to await the findings of that rather than proceeding on a piecemeal basis. He said for now, all they had was an "ill-defined proposal" for the old fire hall.

Coun. Ivan Ingram argued that councillors had been hearing about the need to do something with the old fire hall for years, and it was a deteriorating eyesore.

The other successful council overrides were around the source of funding for a road sidewalk and crosswalk project; and that the faulty riverwalk lighting be dismantled with a revised scope for replacement.

Carter's other vetoes passed. They included: a pickup truck for the public works department, a roads labourer, and a bulldozer for the landfill, in addition to the organics program.

With Carter and Sayne in alignment on the majority of votes, and McKelvey, Ingram, Johannessen and Sisson forming a tight pact of four, the majority of swing votes fell to deputy mayor Lisa Schell. Council overrides this time around required a 5-2 vote, while at the last round it was 4-3.

Schell said during the meeting, "it's no secret I'm in opposition to the Strong Mayors powers so I feel like it puts me in a predicament because in order to have the majority of council actually have the voice and the vote for their community, I have to vote against something I formerly supported. However, at the end of the day, I still truly believe that the majority of council should be the people making the decisions - before the Strong Mayors Act was established, we wouldn't even be sitting here today."

The tax rate increase is 5.13 per cent, or a $23.99 hike per $100,000 of residential assessment.

COUNTY OF HALIBURTON NEWS

Two new ambulances

The County of Haliburton, at its Jan. 28 meeting, gave pre-budget approval for a 2027 ambulance replacement, and awarded the purchase of the 2026 and 2027 ambulances to Crestline Coach.

Haliburton County paramedic service director Michael Slatter said delivery timelines are approximately 14 months. He said the 2020 vehicle needs to be replaced as soon as possible and the 2023 vehicle has reached its expected replacement mileage.

The price is $510,561.50 plus HST for both, requiring a deposit of $151,050.60 at the time of order. The purchase of one vehicle is part of the approved budget for 2026. The purchase of the second vehicle required pre-approval for the 2027 budget.

The chief added ambulances should be replaced every four to five years, or at 250,000 to 300,000 kilometres, whichever comes first. The 2020 ambulance has 366,000 kms, the 2023 one 274,000 km.

Slatter said with increasing call volumes over the past few years, they are putting mileage on at a faster rate.

Under questioning from coun. Jennifer Dailloux, he said while they are making fewer out-of-town trips due to new diagnostic imaging at the Haliburton hospital, the closure of the Minden ER had necessitated longer trips to Haliburton for some calls.

He added as vehicles age and the mileage increases; they tend to see that maintenance costs and vehicle downtime begin to rise exponentially.

(County of Haliburton news compiled by Lisa Gervais)

Haliburton County paramedic service director Michael Slatter. *Photo by Lisa Gervais*

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Health unit gives update on cybersecurity incident

By Lisa Gervais

Lakelands Public Health advised the public on Feb. 3 that it is currently responding to a cybersecurity incident discovered on Jan. 29, affecting some of its internal systems.

The health unit said it was sharing the information "proactively in the interest of transparency and public trust."

Upon becoming aware of the issue, Lakelands Public Health said it took immediate steps to secure its systems and initiated its incident response protocols. It said a leading cybersecurity firm has been engaged to support the investigation, containment, and recovery efforts, and working closely with experts to restore systems safely and efficiently.

Dr. Thomas Piggott. *File.*

The health unit said some programs and services may experience temporary disruptions as restoration work continues. Where impacts occur, affected individuals and partners will be contacted directly. They added that based on what they know to date, the systems that house data for infectious disease and clinical appointments (immunization, sexual health, etc.) have not been impacted.

"The investigation remains ongoing, and Lakelands Public Health is doing everything we can to protect personal information and restore public health services. In the event the investigation determines that any personal or personal health information has been impacted, any affected parties will be contacted accordingly.

"Our priority response to this event is protecting the information entrusted to us and maintaining continuity of critical public health services," said Dr. Thomas Piggott, medical officer of health and chief executive officer for Lakelands Public Health. "By taking a proactive approach and engaging specialized expertise, we are working diligently to restore systems and keep our community informed."

Lakelands Public Health said it will continue to provide updates as more information becomes available and appreciates the patience and understanding of residents, partners, and staff as the work progresses.

For further updates, visit lakelandsPH.ca

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Highlander news

Contractor pleads guilty to assault

By Lisa Gervais

A Dysart et al contractor has pleaded guilty to assault in a Lindsay courthouse.

Mordecai M. Berlad, 64, of 4152 Trapper Ct, Mississauga - who was referred to in an agreed statement of facts as 'Moe' from 'Moe's Renos' in Haliburton – faced Justice J.L. Broderick Dec. 17.

She ordered three years' probation and bail conditions that include no contact with the victim and their spouse; a weapons prohibition; and not doing business under a last name other than his legal last name.

Initially, Berlad was facing a sexual assault charge. Mid-trial, that was changed to assault. A plea bargain was struck and a guilty plea made.

In an agreed statement of facts, the Crown and defence said the victim and her spouse met Berlad at the Haliburton Home and Cottage Show, saying he identified himself as Moe of Moe's Renos. After a discussion, he agreed to renovate their Dysart et al home. The statement said the spouse said Moe did not provide a last name.

The statement went on to say Berlad was bound by a probation order, for two years, for a sexual assault conviction (in Hamilton) on Nov. 15, 2022.

The statement said Berlad began renovations with a crew at the victim's home in July 2024 – until he was fired in the middle of August 2024.

The statement said "Mr. Berlad made unwanted physical contact with (the victim), specifically he massaged her shoulders. She did not consent to the massage."

The hearing was on Dec. 17 in Lindsay. *File.*

The victim testified during the trial, on the initial sexual assault charge, that he "groped" her on several occasions.

Berlad was given an opportunity, but did not address the court. An outstanding fail to comply with probation charge was stayed.

Crown attorney Ghazi Jarrar, referencing the victim impact statement, said, "we do see that (the victim) was impacted by what took place. It affected her sense of safety in her home. It had some impact on her relationship. Ultimately what took place here did take place inside her home, which must have felt particularly violating for her, so she is entitled to the protection of the court."

Berlad's defence counsel, Coulson Mills, said Berlad had been in business for 40 years, originally in Toronto and southern Ontario, but in Haliburton the last four years, where he made "a move to try and start a new life after the Hamilton experience."

In that matter, *The Hamilton Spectator* reported that Berlad was originally charged with four counts of sexual assault but pleaded guilty to one count of sexually assaulting a realtor he lured to his home. In late 2022, he was sentenced to six months of house arrest.

On Dec. 17 in Lindsay, Justice Broderick said the joint submission took into account the seriousness of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender.

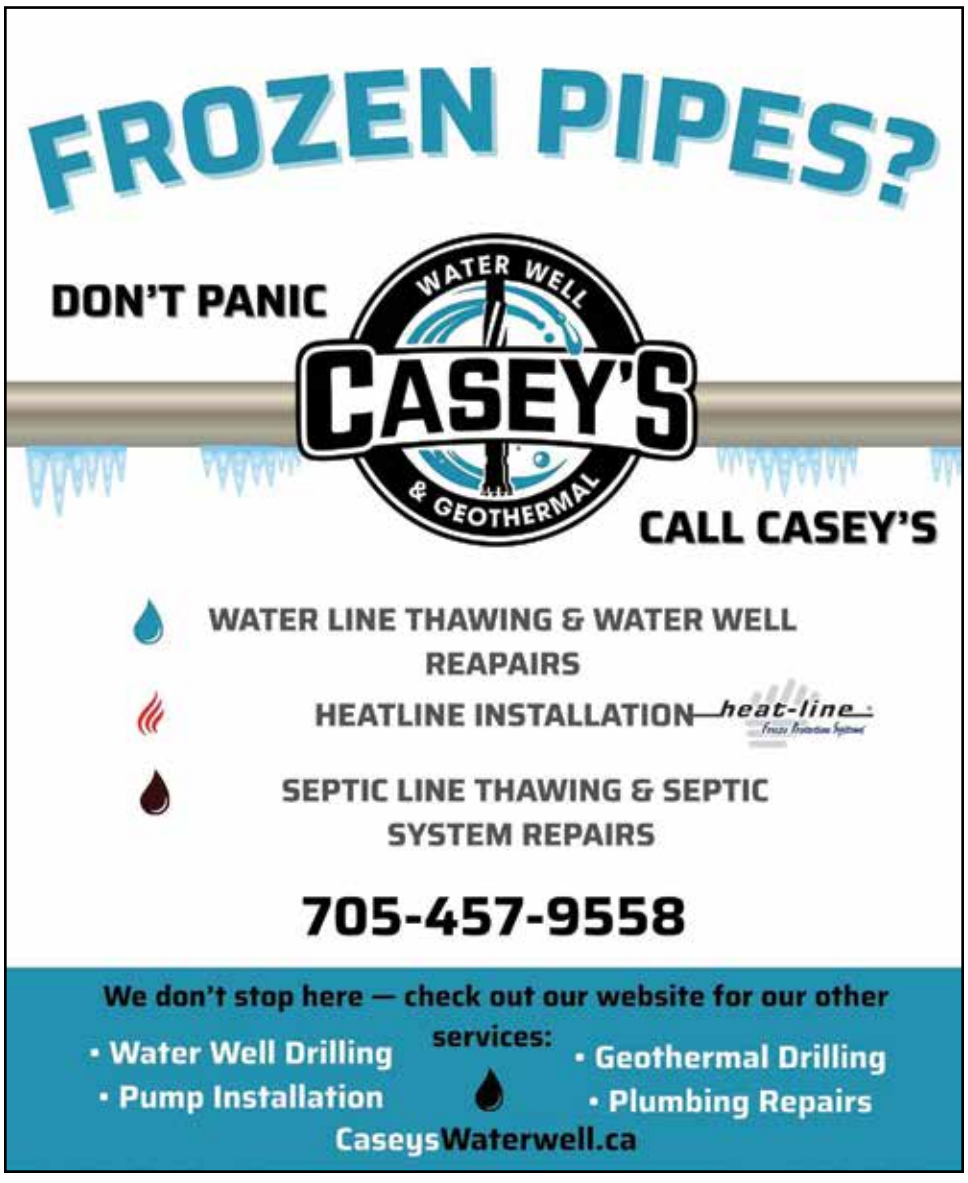
"The assault itself did not involve the use of excessive violence or weapons. At the same time, however, I find that his moral culpability is high in the sense that the touching was certainly intentional."

She said there were aggravating factors: that the offence took place in the victim's home, and in a trailer used temporarily as a residence "a place where she was entitled to feel safe and secure from non-consensual touching." She added Berlad's criminal record was aggravating … "in that he has a conviction which is relatively recent for an offence involving non-consensual contact."

However, Justice Broderick said Berlad contributes to the community through his work as a full-time contractor. She also acknowledged that by pleading guilty, he spared the victim having to be cross-examined.

She said registering a conviction sends a message not only to Berlad, but to others in the community "that there is a significant consequence for unwanted touching."

The Highlander cannot name the victim, or report anything that might identify them.



Editorial opinion

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To tell the story of Haliburton County each week.

To be a source of information and inspiration through stories and ideas.

To report on issues, people and events important to the community.

To reflect and promote pride in the culture, people and landscape of The Highlands.

To encourage Highlanders to believe in themselves, in our community, and in their power to make our place in the world better every day.

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Win-win for all

By Mike Baker

There was some good news coming out of Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) for Haliburton County last week.

On Friday (Jan. 30), the school board announced it had secured approval from the Ministry of Education to build a new outdoor education and Indigenous centre in Minden. The 3,000 sq. ft. facility will be built on land TLDSB owns connecting to Archie Stouffer Elementary School.

With a $1.2 million sticker price, this is, easily, TLDSB's most significant investment in the region for decades. Wes Hahn, the board's director of education, confirmed the build will be completely funded in-house, with no help from the provincial government.

The project, Hahn said, has been driven by TLDSB's board of trustees. When he was hired in 2020, Hahn said one of the main priorities communicated to him was finding a way to bring some sort of outdoor education space to life.

It makes sense, given the area's geography. People travel from all over the world to visit the natural wonders on offer in Haliburton County, Muskoka and Kawartha Lakes.

There has been a massively improved emphasis placed on outdoor education in recent times – this investment continues that change in approach at TLDSB.

When I was in high school in Lindsay from 2007-2009, the extent of the outdoor learning opportunities afforded to me were the odd time I was given permission to swap my creative writing classroom for a shaded spot under a tree by the school field.

Hahn recognized outdoor education plays a pivotal role in shaping youth today. He admitted that not every child thrives in a classroom environment. Some come to life among the flora and fauna.

Specific details on the type of programming students will be able to tap into aren't yet clear, but Hahn said the facility would be able to house several classes of kids at a time. It will operate as a day program, though a later phase of the project will establish camping grounds at the site.

Importantly, this will be available to students of all ages – from Kindergarten through to Grade 12. Activities, Hahn said, will focus on leadership and teambuilding; environmental learning such as orienteering, mapping, plant identification and ecology; physical education via skiing, snowshoeing and hiking; Indigenous learning, including teachings from elders and knowledge holders; and region-specific things like collecting maple sap, studying animal tracks and exploring the Canadian Shield.

There will be an extensive trail system developed on the 90-acre property, one that local residents may be able to enjoy too. Hahn said there will also be a fire pit and gazebo – key for the planned Indigenous programming. Larry O'Connor, an Odawa Anishinaabe knowledge holder and member of the Sheshegwaning First Nation felt this was a huge step towards recognizing the rich history of the land, dating back hundreds of years to its original inhabitants.

In choosing Minden, TLDSB is finally laying significant roots in the County. It has head offices in Bracebridge (Muskoka) and Lindsay (Kawartha Lakes), but this new facility gives the school board a home base in the Highlands.

There will be some economic benefits too – we're told this should create six-10 new jobs, there will also be opportunities for local construction firms to submit bids to help build the thing.

Minden Hills mayor Bob Carter said it best – this is a project that will help put Minden on the map. A win-win for all involved.

SAWDUST STORIES

Clarity: a stone at a time

By Darren Lum

Stepping back from the partially finished fireplace, I noticed something I hadn't seen while working so closely. The pattern was nearly complete on the cement board, the stones I'd been carefully placing for the living room's centrepiece settling into a quiet harmony. Sometimes, we don't realize what we've created until we step back and see the larger shape; the perspective that's impossible when we're focused on the minutiae, each individual stone.

There's a discipline to the work that can't be rushed. Each stone has to be chosen for its fit, its shape, and how it connects to the next. Some need refining, chipping, or cutting before the row feels right.

There were moments I wondered whether I was guiding the work or pushing it. When something seemed close to fitting, it was tempting to make it work rather than step back and reconsider. Still, the work has a way of answering honestly. A stone either settles or it doesn't. Mortar either holds or it cracks.

Doubt isn't failure; it's information. Paying attention to it doesn't mean stopping the work; it means slowing down long enough to understand what the work is asking for next.

One of the necessary steps is mixing the thinset; the bonding substance. There's a specific ratio and consistency required for proper adhesion. Too dry, and nothing holds. Too wet, and the structure weakens. I think of it as alignment between people. When it works, the bonds hold without force, but when it's off, no amount of pressure makes it last.

Just as I began with a finite number of corners, there are foundational needs that must be met to build upward. Answers come, not always spoken, but revealed through action in the process itself, offering the details needed to move to the next row.

Often, we don't fully see what we've built until someone else does. And the inner voice matters too. Sometimes it lifts us, sometimes it judges harshly. Like mortar binding stone, the right balance of attention, care, and patience holds everything together. Too little, and it crumbles. Too much, and it stiffens and cracks. But when the balance is right, what you create, whether stonework or effort in life, stands as something solid, a mosaic shaped by persistence, discipline, and care.

And maybe that's the real measure of the work; not whether it's flawless, but whether it's true. Whether each stone was placed with presence rather than haste. Whether I paused when something didn't quite fit instead of forcing it forward. There's humility in accepting limits, in knowing when a row is finished and when it needs to be undone and rebuilt. The structure holds not because it was rushed to completion, but because care guided each decision.

When I finally stepped back from the fireplace, I could see it for what it was. Each row placed with intention, each decision made as carefully as I knew how. I can't say with certainty that I never forced things, but I do know I worked with patience and care, doing the best I could with the understanding I had at the time. And that is all that can be asked of oneself. I'm responsible for the process, not for forcing stones to fit where they don't belong. Just as in life, I can't make someone meet me where I need them to be. What I can do is bring attention, honesty, and grace to each step, and trust that what stands is an honest reflection of how the work was done.

Correction: In the Jan. 29 edition of *The Highlander,* in the story about Ruth MacBrien celebrating her 100th birthday we incorrectly described Ruth as a centurion, which was a commander in the Roman military, rather than a centenarian. We apologize for this error.

Editorial opinion

LETTERS

Opportunities for Minden Hills

Dear editor,

Minden Hills is at a very promising time of evaluation, especially with current provincial mandates. Recently, we saw how mayoral or "king's" powers don't always work in a truly democratic society. Kudos to the council members who stopped the waiting game.

There is so much opportunity here, and a wealth of knowledge already in the community. Planners, engineers, architects, and volunteers can help facilitate ideas. We don't always need consultants. Residents, schools, churches, and local groups often have great ideas if we give them a voice

Seasonal residents should also be included. For example, I've been part of this area for a long time. I watched my first Star Wars movie at the Beaver Theatre, known now as The Pigeon's Den. Some council members showed a real initiative: addressing the eyesore of the old fire hall. Imagine replacing it with a stage and undercover area to encourage people to come into town; see performers, sing along, enjoy farmers markets, or stop for lunch with snowmobiles parked nearby. The possibilities are endless.

It takes creative councillors who understand budgets, community engagement, and how to involve residents in the process.

Make sure you are on the voters list. As long as you live in the area or hold property, you can vote and run for council. Snowbirds, cottagers, and renters are all included in this election. You can be a snowbird and run for council.

I serve on the HHHS advisory, spoke at a County council meeting Jan. 28 (virtual), and attended the Jan. 31 Minden Hills council meeting virtually. HHHS meetings will continue in hybrid format. While I won't be running for council this time, we do need change. No one should become mayor or councillor by acclamation. Check your voter status at elections@mindenhills.ca

Joy Webster
Minden Hills

Thanks to 'Good Samaritans'

Dear editor,

Sunday we were driving on Eagle Lake Road when an ambulance was rushing towards us to an emergency with lights and siren going.

We moved to the right to give it space and we slipped off the road into a snowbank and got really stuck. Lucky for us, a car behind us stopped and, using a heavy tow strap which he luckily had, he pulled us out.

A serious thank you to Kieran O'Byrne and the others for stopping to help us.

We were very lucky to have such great Haliburton people stop to help us.

Thank you all.

Jim and Marilyn Frost
Haliburton

We want to hear from you

Send us your opinion on any and all things related to living in the County

editor@thehighlander.ca

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Shae Evans captures the soft, frosty light of morning in the County.

HUMANS OF HALIBURTON HIGHLANDS

A close up with Canoe FM reporter

by Susan Tromanhauser

Elizabeth Oakley wanted a change. With the looming retirement of her partner, and "public civility taking a back seat," she was inspired to move from an urban life in Barrie to somewhere more remote, with privacy and quiet. A home on 9.5 acres backing onto the Irondale River was just the place.

The river's rapids sealed the deal. Oakley's partner is an avid whitewater kayaker, and Oakley describes herself as a "survivalist kayaker." She knows a roll will turn into a swim, and she may need to portage some sections, but the challenge of surviving a kayak trip down the river is exhilarating.

Once settled into their rural home, Oakley was inspired to raise chickens. Unfortunately, a predator invaded the coop and after only a few months, her chickens disappeared. Oakley admits she made the rookie mistake of naming her chickens, surprising herself with the extent of her grief. Other adversities to overcome with the move to Haliburton County were getting used to blackflies each spring, arranging plowing each winter and learning the complexities of the local landfill.

Adversities aside, being part of community has made the move to Haliburton worthwhile. Oakley's high school years living in Charleston Lake, in Eastern Ontario, taught her about the interconnectedness of small-town residents. When she moved to Haliburton County, she knew she needed to fit in and build trust with her new neighbours, she needed to learn the history of the area and discover who "the players were."

Oakley found "a back stage pass to what is happening in Haliburton" through a local journalism initiative grant. Making use of her education and experience in radio and television, Oakley began County Close Up, a weekly report to tell hyperlocal stories on Canoe FM.

Through County Close Up, Oakley has met an incredible "amount of smart, talented, passionate people." Many in Haliburton County "have lived big lives" but most importantly, will "give the shirt off their back." Oakley cites several successful fundraising campaigns as examples of the area's generosity as well as her own personal experience. Nine days without power during the ice storm, a generator out of propane, while at SIRCH Repair Café, a stranger overheard Oakley's predicament and volunteered to cook meals for her.

While County Close Up keeps Oakley busy, she has found time to squeeze in a return to the stage. After a 27-year hiatus from acting to raise her three children, Oakley joined Highlands Little Theatre. In March, she will be one of 10 women telling the story of a Women's Institute putting together a fundraising calendar. Yes, there will be "artfully disguised" nudity as part of the plot, but Oakley trusts director Jack Brezina and assures the audience will be entertained not shocked. Oakley hints there may be an actual calendar coming soon.

Elizabeth Oakley. *Submitted.*

Oakley is happy to use her storytelling talents with County Close Up and Highlands Little Theatre. The best part of Oakley's move to Haliburton is she 'gets to' tell the stories, she doesn't 'have to'.

Highlander arts

The dukes of folk rock

The Haliburton Legion was rocking Jan. 31 as Canadian folk band Union Duke brought its unique bluegrass-inspired sound to the County. Presented by the Haliburton County Folk Society, as part of February Folk Fest, the concert was well-attended as locals enjoyed what the Toronto-based quintet brought to the stage. Lead singer Matt Warry-Smith described the band as, “two-fifths country, two-fifths city, and one-fifth whiskey,” developing a distinctive sound that has seen the group build a cult following in the Canadian roots music scene since its formation in 2010. *(Mike Baker)*

Above: Union Duke take centre stage at the Haliburton Legion. Right: County-based musician Thom Lambert opened for Union Duke. *Photos by Steven Sherwood.*

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Mike McFadden is aiming to reopen his butcher shop in April. *Photo by Mike Baker.*

New-look butcher reopening in April

By Mike Baker

A decade on from opening his own butcher shop in Haliburton village, Mike McFadden is getting ready to launch an even bigger and better space for meat enthusiasts in the spring.

McFadden's Meat Market on Hops Drive has been closed since Dec. 31, with McFadden in the middle of an expansion he says is five or six years in the making. Taking over a portion of the space vacated by the former NAPA Auto Parts dealer, which recently opened a new location on Industrial Park Road, McFadden said his operation is growing significantly, from about 1,400 sq. ft. to 2,400 sq. ft.

The butcher told *The Highlander* Jan. 30 the project is about halfway complete, with plans to reopen his doors in April.

"We've been planning and wanting this expansion for a long time, but we just couldn't find the location to do it," McFadden said.

Once NAPA moved out of the unit right next door, McFadden said it was "too perfect an opportunity to pass up." He quickly got to planning renovations with his landlord, Adam Brind, with work beginning at the turn of the new year.

There will be upgrades to the building's exterior – including new windows and doors. Inside, McFadden says it will have a much different look and feel to before.

"We're adding 1,000 sq. ft. and about 800 sq. ft. of that will be new retail space. We're also adding one more walk-in freezer, which will allow us to keep up with the growing demand for processing meats brought to us by local hunters," he said.

The crown jewel of the expansion will be the reintegration of a deli counter, something McFadden had when he started the business in 2016. He's also doubling his freezer space, given the growing demand for frozen foods. There will also be space to showcase pickled products, baked goods and specialty cheeses.

There's one feature McFadden is particularly excited about debuting – a new ice table that he says will allow for a "proper seafood bar.

"We always bring in fresh seafood every couple of weeks, but I've been wanting to find a way to do oysters, mussels and clams a few days a week. I just didn't have the facilities to do it properly before, but I'm going to do my very best to do it now," McFadden said.

After honing his craft "working with great people" at the Haliburton Foodland, West Guilford Store and Todd's Independent, where he operated a meat counter with an open cutting area, McFadden said he's excited to expand on his open-floor concept in his shop.

"My vision has always been about being as open and transparent as possible – I want people to see the meat being processed, to talk to them and show them how we prepare things, having that traceability all the way through," he said. "This is about making things bigger and better for everyone."

With Brind and CDH Carpentry doing a lot of the heavy lifting so far, McFadden says it will be a community effort getting the store finished, with about a dozen local tradesmen and contractors pitching in to help. While it's been difficult for McFadden being away from his usual day-to-day operations, he said words of encouragement from the community have kept him grounded.

"It's incredible how many people will stop and ask me when we're reopening. It's a nice feeling to be missed," McFadden said.

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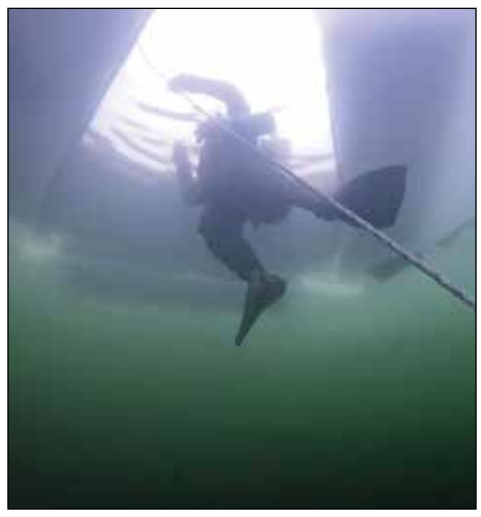

Aaron Darling, top right, is excited for this weekend's ice diving festival. Left, a student, Gerardo Zapata, in full gear. *Photos submitted.*

Hitting the depths of an icy Miskwabi an 'extreme sport'

By Mike Baker

While Aaron Darling loves scuba diving from his cottage on Miskwabi Lake during the summer, he gets an even greater thrill plunging into the icy waters at this time of the year.

The longtime diving enthusiast will be leading a group of six students into the frigid depths of his local lake Feb. 7-8 for the third annual Miskwabi Ice Diving Festival. He launched the event in 2024 to show people that, with some work, almost anyone could try one of the world's most extreme sports.

It all starts with learning to dive in warmer waters – something Darling, a PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer, has been doing in Haliburton County for as long as he can remember.

"When I first learned, it was under the supervision of my grandfather and I was like 10 years old. He had a place on Paudash Lake and it just blew me away the kind of adventures we would go on," Darling said. He became certified at 16, "and really got into it… I've been diving pretty much ever since, but it wasn't until about four years ago that I got really interested in cutting a hole in the ice and going cold water diving."

Ice diving carries much more danger than regular diving, Darling said.

"Ice diving is an overhead (where direct vertical ascent to the surface isn't always possible) environment, a bit like diving in a cave. The difference with a cave, though, is you're diving down a narrow hallway. When you're diving into a lake during winter, you're jumping into an auditorium with very little way to figure out where you're going – except up," Darling said. "But the problem with that is you've got to find the hole you came through."

There are lots of safety mechanisms in place – everyone dives with a partner, who are attached by a line that goes back to the surface. That ensures everyone can find their way back to the entry point, Darling said.

Once submerged, divers descend 70-80 feet. Darling said he's taken the plunge dozens of times from his property on Miskwabi in recent years.

"It's really awesome diving at this time of the year, because all the algae blooms and things that make the water [murky] in the summer have died off, so the water is very clear," he said. "When I've gone down there, I've found balls of fish wintering together on the lakebed – just 200 fish all hanging out in a small area.

"Where we'll be jumping in over the weekend is about 100 feet out from shore. It's basically a straight drop off with beautiful rock formations… it's also really cool going down there and looking up, you can see the lines from all the snowmobiles that have passed over the lake," he added.

Darling is partnering with four Ontario dive shops for the festival, which is all about training people to ice dive safely. None of the participants are novices, he notes, with the six taking part this weekend all advanced certified scuba divers. Darling said, ideally, people will have experience diving in colder conditions.

There's a classroom component before people get to go through the ice, covering how to properly prepare a hole, how to use rope, communication techniques and effective gear configurations. To become certified for ice diving, people need to complete three dives and spend a minimum 20 minutes underwater each time.

It takes significant manpower to run these events – Darling said there needs to be at least five people on watch above the surface in case anything goes wrong.

He recommends participants wear drysuits, not wetsuits, and always carry contingencies – spare air supplies and other equipment in case it's needed in a pinch.

Darling said, after this year, he'll have taught about 20 people to ice dive in Miskwabi Lake. Anyone interested in learning can contact him at aarondarlingpadi@gmail.com.

"This is getting more and more popular every year… the whole idea is to help people understand what's under the water and to respect it. It's nice to be able to see everything up close and learn about what happens at different stages of the year, see the changes our lakes go through," Darling said.

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Festive donors fund non-profit

Places for People (P4P) is celebrating another successful holiday fundraising campaign, with its end-of-year 'Shingle All the Way' effort raising $25,604. The County-based non-profit's president, Susan Tromanhauser, said the money will go directly toward providing safe, secure and affordable housing for people in need across the Highlands. "Although we didn't quite reach our $30,000 goal, the result is a powerful reminder of what we can achieve together. Every contribution, big or small, helps ensure even more people have a warm, stable place to call home." Next up for P4P is its annual 'Sleeping in Cars' event, taking place March 27 in the Head Lake Park parking lot, where the group will be raising more money to support its 21 housing units across the County. To find out how to participate, visit placesforpeople.ca. *(Mike Baker)*

Above: Places for People volunteers Roger Trull, Elaine Bell, Terry Tromanhauser, Susan Tromanhauser and Paul Sheardown met at Castle Antiques Jan. 30 to celebrate the success of 'Shingle All the Way'. *Photo by Mike Baker.*

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NEW TEXTILE RECYCLING LOCATION ADDED AT THE INGOLDSBY TRANSFER STATION

We're excited to share that our textile recycling program has expanded. In addition to the Scotch Line Landfill, you can now drop off gently used clothing, linens, and more at the Ingoldsby Transfer Station. Accepted donations include towels, sheets, blankets, fashion accessories such as scarves and belts, as well as books and stuffed animals.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

We are currently recruiting for the following vacancies:

- Parks Summer Students
- Recreation Summer Students
- Cultural Centre Summer Students
- Casual Operator in Community Services
- Part-Time Waste Facilities Operator
- Seasonal Waste Disposal Site Attendants

Please visit our website www.mindenhills.ca/careers for more information and how to apply.

FAMILY DAY AT THE S.G. NESBITT MEMORIAL ARENA

The Arena will be open on Monday, February 16th, 2026, for Family Day. Join us for a variety of family friendly activities!

SAFE WINTER DRIVING

The safest place is well behind the plow. Wait for plows to pull over before passing. Don't accelerate too quickly —the road ahead is unplowed and could be slick or snowy. Avoid parking in the street. Plows can't clear roads that are blocked by parked cars.

COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted in-person (Council Chambers, 7 Milne St., Minden) and with electronic participation. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:

- February 12 – Regular Council Meeting
- February 26 – Regular Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link.

MINDEN HILLS CULTURAL CENTRE

- A selection of artwork from the Agnes Jamieson Gallery's permanent collection, as well as new acquisitions, is now on display.
- We will host a free screening of *Speakers for the Dead* (2000) on Thursday, February 5 at 1:00 PM. The documentary uncovers the forgotten history of a Black settlement in rural Ontario. In collaboration with the Haliburton County Public Library, this screening is open to all ages. Admission is free. No pre-registration is required.
- Join the UFO's (UnFinished Objects Craft Group) in the Welch Room on Friday, February 6 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM.
- Join the Lapine Lap Mural Tour, part of the Hike Haliburton Festival Winter Edition on Saturday, February 7 at 10:00 AM. Starting at the Township of Minden Hills Administration Building, the tour is an easy, guided walk highlighting large-scale reproductions of André Lapine's paintings. The walk wraps up at the Agnes Jamieson Gallery, where visitors are invited to explore our current André Lapine exhibition alongside the gallery's permanent collection. For more information and to register: https://www.facebook.com/HikeHaliburton

For information on all the programs and exhibits offered at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre: culturalcentre@mindenhills.ca or call 705-286-3763.

Township of Minden Hills

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Your donations support life-saving equipment and essential services such as Meals on Wheels, medically necessary transportation, and enhanced care for long-term care residents. Because of you, vital healthcare in the Highlands continues to grow stronger.

A special **THANK YOU** to Scott Pollard and Suzannah Patmios for their generous matching donation, which inspired so many to give, and to Larry Hewitt of Hawk River Construction for helping us spread the word and amplify our efforts.

Wishing you a year filled with hope, wellness, and prosperity in 2026.

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Highlander events

Scaling the deep freeze

Haliburton Forest and Wild Life Reserve hosted public ice climbing at its West Shore Crag location Feb. 1, with six people scaling an approximate 50-foot naturally forming ice sheet. The half day adventure, available through winter, is geared towards beginners looking to get a taste of what the sport has to offer, said the Forest's Angie Grant. "No experience necessary – you will learn the basics and how to safely take a swing at ice climbing," she said. All equipment is provided, with guides setting everything up and providing safety demonstrations before any climbing begins. Tours can run with a minimum of two guests, with climbers needing to be at least 12. For more, visit haliburtonforest.com. *(Mike Baker)*

Left: Cai Minor, Bridget Spoel, Sarah MacGregor and Jada de Jue prepare to scale the ice wall. Centre: Spoel waves. Right: Michael Stein digs in. *Photos by Steven Sherwood.*

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GARDENS OF HALIBURTON

Highlander events

Youth centre turns one

The Bridge Youth Centre in Haliburton celebrated its first-year anniversary last week. Community director Leanne Young said more than 60 youth joined Haliburton Youth Unlimited staff and volunteers during their three program nights to mark the occasion. The centre is located at 2 Victoria St. Young said there was a free meal, and cake and cupcakes. *(Lisa Gervais).*

Youth, staff and volunteers celebrate one year of the Bridge Youth Centre. *Photos submitted by Leanne Young.*

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Old Time Winter Square Dance
Presented by: Dance Happens Here Haliburton (DH3) with Hike Haliburton – Winter Edition & February Folk Festival
Saturday, Feb 7, 2026
7:00 PM at the Haliburton Legion
Please bring your own indoor shoes!
All ages and abilities are welcome—no experience required. Featuring square dance caller Hannah Shira Naiman, with live bluegrass music by Nathan Smith, Kyle Kirkpatrick, and Tim O'Reilly, plus a special performance by the Haliburton Scottish Country Dancers.
Tickets: $20 for adults; $10 for college students; free for children and high school students. Available at dancehappenshere.com and Redmans Records.
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GARDENING FOR LIFE

Highlander sports

Roger Trull is excited about the Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2026. *File.*

Induction set for May

Continued from page 1

Bishop was a talented hockey player in his youth, winning five straight Ontario Minor Hockey Association championships with the Haliburton Huskies, captaining the Hal High Redmen hockey team and playing professionally with the San Angelo Outlaws (Western Professional Hockey League) and Knoxville Ice Bears (Atlantic Coast Hockey League).

Bolt was a prominent student athlete at Hal High, competing in track and field, football, basketball, badminton and volleyball.

While attending Ryerson (now Toronto Metropolitan University), she won several awards across multiple sports, including the prestigious G.L. Dobson Trophy in 1978 for greatest contribution to athletics.

Madden won Ontario mens' curling championship gold in 1999, podiumed in several Ontario senior mens' curling championships between 2015 and 2024, and earned wins at the 2023 world senior mens' curling championship and 2024 Canadian mens' curling championship.

Fedeski is considered a pioneer for girls' hockey in the County, representing the Highland Storm rep team from the age of seven before playing NCAA Div. 1 hockey with the University of New Hampshire. In 2018, Fedeski was drafted 18th overall by the Toronto Furies in the Canadian Women's Hockey League, playing 24 games for the team in 2018-19.

Petrow was a decorated minor hockey player, winning championships as a defenceman with the Haliburton Huskies and Central Ontario Wolves before playing for the Oshawa Generals and Kingston Frontenacs in the Ontario Hockey League. He was drafted by the Anaheim Ducks in the 2002 NHL Entry Draft.

Trull said the Bishop family are being recognized for their work running Sir Sam's Ski/Ride; Neil Burk for his contributions to softball and curling; Helen Burk for her many years volunteering with hockey, fastball, lob ball, curling, squash and golf; and Symons for her 45 years of dedication as head coach of the Minden Figure Skating Club.

"If we didn't have these builders paving the way, there simply wouldn't have been opportunities for many of the athletes we've seen succeed in their chosen sport," Trull said.

Asked how he feels the Hall of Fame has been received by the public, and how long it can be sustained, Trull was optimistic on both fronts.

"I think everybody's happy we have one – I think we all wish we had a better location," he said. "We're excited for the future and, whenever a new arena is built, our hope is for a dedicated space where we can really showcase our sporting stars.

"We've got a long of young people now who are great athletes, out doing great things in the world. It won't be too long before some of them would qualify to be considered for the hall," he added.

For more information, visit hhshoff.ca.

SIR SAM'S INN & SPA

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Feb 28 - Jeff Moulton
Feb 8 Join us in Gunner's for the big game
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Huskies #22 Ryan Gosse unloads a shot with a big bend in his hockey stick. *Photo by Steven Sherwood.*

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Huskies clinch playoff spot

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By Lisa Gervais

For their fifth consecutive season in Haliburton County, the Huskies have clinched a playoff spot.

They did so this past weekend in the OJHL's East Conference.

After a slow start to the season, coach Jordan Bailey said, "obviously, it's always nice when you get that 'x' beside your name in the standings. Now, it's just about trying to get home ice advantage."

The Huskies were in fifth place in the East Conference as of Feb. 3, with a record of 27 wins, 13 losses, a tie, and five overtime losses for 60 points. However, they were equal points with Newmarket in fourth; just two points behind Pickering in third; and only seven away from the Stoufville Spirit for second. The Trenton Golden Hawks have so far distanced themselves from the competition, sitting comfortably in first place. The Wellington Dukes are six points back of the pack.

The Huskies are preparing for the Burlington Cougars Feb. 7 at home.

"At this point, every game is a playoff game for us because we are jockeying with four teams for standings," Bailey said. "If Stouffville was ever to slip up, you could maybe even try to jump into second.

"Just preparing yourself every day over this next month, and treating it like it's playoffs because once playoffs come, if you haven't already done that, it can go by quick for you."

Huskies 6 Newmarket 1

The Huskies dominated the Newmarket Hurricanes Feb. 1. Despite being outshot 42-37, they took advantage with two powerplay goals to secure a 6-1 win.

Chase Del Colombo opened the scoring on the PP at 12:41 of the first, from Liam Oravsky and Ryan Fairbairn. Less than four minutes later, Lewis Hergaarden tallied, with an assist to Fairbairn. The blue and white made it a 3-0 game at 8:39 of the second as Nic Ferrante fired one in, with the assist going to Hergaarden. Newmarket answered at 12:40 to go into the dressing room down 3-1. But it was all Huskies in the third: Nate Taylor at 9:25 from Brody Coe and Kaiden Thatcher; Oravsky, from Del Colombo and Fairbairn with the man advantage at 11:15; and Hergaarden with a short-handed tally, unassisted at 16:23.

Owen Edwards turned aside 41 of 42 shots in the win.

Bailey felt his specialty teams played a big role in the victory, with the two powerplay goals and a short-handed marker.

He added the fourth line "was really big," tallying three of the goals against a top contender.

Huskies 1 Royals 5

It was a different story the day before, as the Markham Royals beat up on the Huskies 5-1 Jan. 31.

Despite outshooting their opponents 55-33, the blue and white could get only one past Markham goaltender Crosby Dacosta. Carson Durnin scored at 8:43 of the second, from Gosse and Coe. Carter Nadon, between the pipes, turned aside 28 of 32.

Bailey felt they took too many penalties, requiring specialty teams, and disrupting the flow of the game. "So, we have to stay out of the box in those situations." They also ran into a hot Dacosta.

The Huskies host Burlington Feb. 7. Puck drop is scheduled for 4 p.m. at S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena. They then travel to Newmarket for a Feb. 10 tilt with the Hurricanes.

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Home of the Highland Storm

Left: Lucas Hillaby at the edge of the crease. Right: Nolan Carpenter reaches for the puck. *Photos by Steven Sherwood.*

U11 Rep Storm are A champs

The U11 Rep Tom Prentice & Sons and the U13 Rep Curry Chevrolet teams both participated in our annual home tournament and both took home the title of A champs this past weekend.

The U11 team hit the ice to represent the Storm at the annual U11/U13 Rep Gold Classic Jan. 30-Feb. 1 and what a show they put on.

The Storm kicked off the tournament Friday night against the well-known powerhouse team, Clearview. Knowing it would be a battle, the Storm came out strong and never let up for a moment. With resilient offence and defence, the Storm earned a very well-deserved tie.

Bright and early Saturday morning, the Storm returned to the rink for their second game of the tournament. While the temperature outside was well below freezing, the Storm was red-hot on the ice, earning a dominant 7–0 win over Elmvale.

They didn't slow their momentum heading into the third game, coming out fierce against Kawartha. Outstanding backchecking from our forwards and strong offensive plays by our defence led to another impressive 3 - 0 win; clinching a first-place finish and a spot in the finals on day three.

Tension was high as the Storm took the ice for the gold medal game, once again facing the strong Clearview squad. It was a nail-biter, with action back-and-forth through all three periods. But with "the Wall" Julian Mardus in net and the entire team delivering their best performance, the Storm prevailed; bringing home the gold with a thrilling 3–2 win.

The coaches could not be prouder of every single player, their development, and the passion each one brings to the ice every time they step on it.

Look out, playoffs. The Storm is coming. *(Submitted)*

SCORE BOARD

Jan. 26 U11 Rep Curry Chevrolet vs Lindsay 5-1 L
U9MD Haliburton Hockey Haven vs Woodville 5-1 L
Jan. 27 U15 Rep Cheryl Smith RE/MAX vs Newcastle 5-0 W
U15 The Pepper Mill Steak & Pasta House vs Sturgeon 4-2 W
U11 Carquest Minden vs Sturgeon 4-0 W
Jan. 28 U11 Rep Tom Prentice & Sons vs Ennismore 5-3 W
U13 Rep Curry Chevrolet vs Lindsay 7-4 W
U15 Rep Cheryl Smith RE/MAX vs Mariposa 3-1 W
Jan. 29 U11 Rep Tom Prentice & Sons vs Lindsay 6-1 L
U15 Minden Pharmasave vs Brock 2-1 W
Jan. 30 U13 Casey's Water Well & Geothermal vs Brock 5-2 W
U18 A&W Haliburton vs Millbrook 4-4 T
U18 Rep Haliburton Timber Mart vs Upper York 7-4 L
Jan. 31 U9 Cottage Country Building Supplies vs Mariposa 8-4 W
U11 Carquest Minden vs Sturgeon 4-4 T
U15 The Pepper Mill Steak & Pasta House vs Durham 4-2 W
U13 Casey's Water Well and Geothermal vs Millbrook 9-3 W
Feb. 1 U9 MD Haliburton Hockey Haven vs Brock 6-4 L
U9 Sharp Electric vs Sturgeon 1-0 L
U18 A&W Haliburton vs Brock 5-1 W

STARS of the WEEK

JULIAN MARDUS
He stood on his head all tournament, making clutch saves in every big moment and giving his team total confidence.

KIPTON CUNNINGHAM
He controlled the game all weekend, with smart decisions, strong puck battles, and relentless effort.

LUCAS HILLABY
He was a constant threat on the wing all weekend, using his speed and skill to create scoring chances.

Photos by Tim Tofflemire

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What's on

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION EVENTS

Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 129 Haliburton

Mondays: Office open 9 a.m. to noon, clubroom closed. Bridge at 1 p.m., youth dart league (ages 10-18) 6:20 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Tuesdays: Cadets after school starts at 5 p.m., meeting starts at 6 p.m. Games and cards night starting at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome. Darts league 7 p.m. start.
Wednesdays: Bid euchre 1 p.m. start, Remembrance Hall. Bingo will resume in the spring.
Thursdays: General meeting third Thursday of the month, March to December; ladies auxiliary meeting last Thursday of the month, February to November.
Fridays: Meat draw, five draws, five prize each draw, first draw at 4:30 p.m., last draw at 6:30 p.m., tickets are $2 per draw; fun darts at 4:30 p.m. onwards; 50/50 draw at 5 p.m., tickets are $1 and available in the clubroom.
Saturdays: Open only for special events Office hours: Monday 3 to 6 p.m., Tuesday 5 to 9 p.m., Wednesday/Thursday 3 to 6 p.m., Friday 3 to 7 p.m., Saturday/Sunday closed Clubroom hours: Monday 3-6 p.m., Tues 5-9 p.m., Wed/Thurs 3-6 p.m., Fri 3-7 p.m., Saturday/Sunday closed.

Royal Canadian Legion - Mabel D. Brannigan Branch 636 Minden

Lunch 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. **Monday to Thursday** with regular menu and daily special including Liver Lovers' **Tuesday**.
Friday Fish & Chips & Wings. Lunch 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and dinner 4-7 p.m.
Saturday all day breakfast 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with meat draws at 11 a.m.

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Weekly activities:
Karaoke: call for dates
Monday: Rug Hookers every second week.
Monday: Euchre 1-3 p.m.
Thursday: Cribbage 1-3 p.m., Darts 7-9 p.m. and euchre 7-9 p.m.

Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 624 Wilberforce

Monday: open 7 to 10 p.m. There's darts Feb. 9, 16 and 23 at 7 p.m. Cost is $5 per player.
Tuesday: closed, special events only. Feb. 10, 17 and 24 is seniors exercise club at 1:30 p.m.
Wednesday: open 2 to 10 p.m. Feb. 11, 18 and 25 is darts at 2 p.m. $5/player. There's also quick supper from 5 to 6:30 p.m., with the menu changing weekly. Cost is $10 per person. And open cribbage starts at 6:30 p.m., no need to pre-register.
Thursday: open 2 to 10 p.m. HHHS social rec Feb. 12 and 26 at 10 a.m.
Friday: open 2 to 11 p.m. Jan. 30 and Feb. 6 and 20 is fish and chips from 5 to 8 p.m. One piece is $15, two pieces is $20. Feb. 13 and 27 is wings and jam session from 5 to 8 p.m. Cost is $15 per pound. Feb. 13 and 27 is community care 55+ lunch at noon, cost is $17 per person.
Saturday: open 2 to 9 p.m. Meat draw Feb. 7, 14, 21 and 28 at 3 p.m. Feb. 14 is the Ken McFarlane Memorial Family Day lake trout ice fishing derby, weigh in at 3 p.m. Register by Feb. 13. Valentine's Day dance Feb. 14 from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Trivia Feb. 28 at 7 p.m., $5 per player.
Sunday: closed, special events only. LA Breakfast is Feb. 8 from 9 to 11 a.m. Cost is $10.

EVENTS

Feb. 5, 1 p.m. The Minden Hills Cultural Centre is hosting a documentary screening of *Speakers for the Dead*, uncovering the largely forgotten chapter of Black history in rural Ontario. All ages are welcome. Admission is free.

Feb. 6, 1:30 to 5 p.m. The Minden Hills and Dysart branches of the Haliburton County Public Library are hosting watch parties for the Olympic Winter Games opening ceremony. Cheer on Team Canada, enjoy incredible performances and kick-off the Olympics with community spirit. Free, all ages welcome, no registration required.

Feb. 7, 10:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. Join the Minden and District Horticultural Society at the Minden Community Centre for its monthly meeting. Guest speakers Connie Walker and Carolyn Perks will host a horticultural trivia contest. This is a free event, but please bring a dish to share and your own tableware, cup and cutlery.

Feb. 7 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Valentine's Market at the Minden Lions Club (166 Bobcaygeon Rd.). The event will feature more than 10 local artists and vendors, with complimentary rainbow heart scratch cards available to attendees while supplies last.

Feb. 7, 1 to 3 p.m. Celebrate Black History Month with a free community film screening of *Akeelah and the Bee* at the Minden Hills and Dysart libraries. The drama follows an 11-year-old girl who discovers a remarkable talent for spelling and sets her sights on the national spelling bee.

Feb. 7, 7 to 10 p.m. Dance Happens Here Haliburton presents an Old Time Winter Square Dance at the Haliburton Legion. In partnership with Hike Haliburton, Winter Edition the event will feature square dance caller Hannah Shira Naiman, live bluegrass musicians from the Barrel Boys and a performance by the Haliburton Scottish Country Dancers. We welcome people of all ages and abilities.

Feb. 7 and 8, Hike Haliburton Winter Edition. Take part in Canada's largest guided hiking festival. Registration is now open – visit hikehaliburton.com for more information.

Feb. 8, 7 p.m. Join seasoned songwriters Lizzy Clarke and Tom Oliver for a creative night that's part open mic, part jam session. Share your original songs, get honest and supportive feedback and swap ideas with fellow writers in a laid-back atmosphere. Event held at Haliburton United Church every second Sunday of the month. Pay what you can, with a $5 suggested donation.

Feb. 9, 7 p.m. Community coffee house at the Haliburton Legion, as part of a continuing series on 'Making our Communities Better Places'. Fay Martin will be the guest speaking about having a spouse with dementia. Music to begin the evening by George and Steve Porter. No admission charge, open to all. Light refreshments will be provided.

Feb. 10, 7 p.m. Environment Haliburton! welcomes guest speaker Leora Berman of The Land Between to talk about how nature, people and data are shaping our future. Taking place virtually on Zoom. Register in advance at environmenthaliburton.org.

Have a non-profit event you want advertised? email mike@thehighlander.ca.

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A month of music to warm county folks

By Lisa Gervais

The County's tourism department and the Haliburton County Folk Society have announced the 2026 February Folk Festival, a community celebration of culture, live music and local talent, taking place throughout the Highlands from Feb. 1–28.

The month-long festival brings together a lineup of performances, from folk and acoustic to pop, blues, rock and opera, spread across a variety of local venues, including the Haliburton Legion, Dominion Hotel, Minden Curling Club, Brooksong Retreat Centre, Boshkung Social, and others.

"We're thrilled to celebrate the incredible musical talent of the Highlands and offer visitors and residents meaningful experiences throughout February," said County of Haliburton tourism manager, Angelica Ingram.

She added, "February Folk Fest is about community spirit, artistic expression, and enjoying great music together in the heart of winter."

She said festival highlights include live performances every week across multiple venues showcasing both local and touring artists; special events, including open jam nights, songwriter circles, winter square-dancing, pop-up performances and family-friendly afternoons of music and community, as well as free and ticketed shows, making live music affordable and available for all.

She thanked CanoeFM, Haliburton Rotary Club, the Haliburton County Development Corporation and Apple Tree Recording Studio for its support.

Square dance caller Hannah Shira Naiman. *Submitted.*

Old-time winter square dance

Dance Happens Here Haliburton (DH^3) is partnering with Hike Haliburton, Winter Edition and February Folk Festival to host an Old Time Winter Square Dance Feb. 7 at the Haliburton Legion.

Hannah Shira Naiman will be teaching the steps and calling the dances while bluegrass musicians Nathan Smith, Kyle Kirkpatrick and Tim O'Reilly will provide the tunes.

The evening will include instruction and a chance for all to participate. When asked to describe the type of dance she will lead, Shira Naiman said, "the one thing I can guarantee is that everyone will have fun."

Participants will have a chance to try out square dances, contra dances (in lines) and circle dances.

The evening will also include a performance by a local group of Haliburton Scottish Country Dancers.

Dance Happens Here chair, Jim Blake said, "it will be a lively way for the community to come together - an old-fashioned square dance – the kind of dancing that everyone can do, whether you're experienced or an absolute beginner."

Go to dancehappenshere.com for more information.

For full event listings for the entire month, including performer details and venue information, go to https://myhaliburtonhighlands.com/february-folk-fest/.

Hike Haliburton

Registration is open for Hike Haliburton Winter Edition 2026, being held Feb. 7-8 this year.

Established in 2020, the snowy version of the popular Hike Haliburton is on snowshoes.

Over the February weekend, the County's tourism department and its partners invite people to discover the snow-covered trails, frozen lakes, and quiet forests of the Haliburton Highlands through a wide variety of guided winter hikes and snowshoe adventures led by knowledgeable hike leaders.

Beyond the hikes, people can experience local arts and culture, warm up with live music and entertainment at community venues, and enjoy winter celebrations happening throughout the region. Go to hikehaliburton.com to register.

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- You can still register if you already have a family doctor
- Registering will not affect your current care
- You can register for a family doctor closer to your home

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A message from the Kawartha Lakes Haliburton Ontario Health Team

Kawartha Lakes Haliburton Ontario Health Team

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Rinse all containers and ensure they are clean of liquids or food

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New! Ice cream containers

Plastic plant pots and trays (no soil)

Glass bottles and jars

Metal beverage cans, metal food cans

Aluminum foil and trays

NEW! Toothpaste Tubes

Cardboard canisters

Styrofoam (food and drink only)

Plastic shopping bags (clean, dry, empty)

Recycling for Papers (Fibres)

Boxboard

Newspapers

Magazines & Catalogues

NEW! Chip bag

NEW! Bubble wrap

Paper (office, mixed, writing)

Envelopes (includes ones with windows)

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Paper beverage cups (plastic lids go in Recycling for Containers)

Brown paper bags

NEW! Pet food bags

Paper egg cartons, paper take-out trays

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Municipality of Dysart et al 705-457-1740 www.dysartetal.ca

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COMMERCIAL SPACE FOR RENT 162 Highland Street, 1500 Sq. ft – available February 1, 2026. Suitable for Retail Space. Contact Michael Easton at 705-457-8868 or e-mail to measton3@rogers.com

HELP WANTED

The Municipality of Dysart et al
is recruiting a
Deputy Treasurer

Due to an upcoming retirement, we are seeking applications from experienced and qualified candidates to fulfill the position of Deputy Treasurer.

The complete detailed job description can be viewed through the Municipal website at: www.dysartetal.ca/municipal-government/careers/

We offer a comprehensive benefit program and enrolment in the OMERS pension plan and a competitive salary grid from $80,464 to $94,131 per annum. Expected start date is Monday, May 4, 2026.

Please submit a resume and cover letter, preferably via email, no later than 4:00 pm on Monday February 23, 2026, to the attention of the Human Resources Manager – Municipality of Dysart et al – hr@dysartetal.ca

P.O. Box 389, Haliburton, Ontario K0M 1S0

We thank all of those who apply, but only those selected for an interview will be contacted. Accommodation for applicants with disabilities will be provided upon request. The Municipality of Dysart et al is an equal opportunity employer. Personal information is collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be used only for employment purposes.

WANTED COMMUNITY JOURNALIST

Join one of Canada's leading community newspapers as we change the local newspaper landscape in 2026

Are you ready to lead one of the most exciting initiatives in Canadian rural media? The Highlander is looking for the right candidate to lead its Local Journalism Initiative (LJI) project.

The job has three components.

- **Managing The Highlander's news feed – a new app that will provide instant access to Haliburton County news from multiple sources. You'll be on the forefront of an effort to provide our community with trustworthy and timely news with no algorithmic manipulation.**
- **Once a week, you'll co-host What the Highlander, a podcast about important issues in Haliburton County. You'll find the right guests, research the topics, and help provide lively and interesting conversation for listeners.**
- **As a journalist, you'll be part of our editorial team, contributing to print products.**

This is a unique role for someone passionate about Haliburton County, rural Ontario, and journalism. We're aiming to displace social media with trustworthy information. With the podcast, we're expanding our mission to bring ideas and information to our community so people can make the best decisions for our future.

Ideally you will be a qualified and tenacious journalist.

The LJI is a one-year grant supported by the Government of Canada. The salary is $41,000 for a four-day week (there may be occasional weekend work), benefits, and vacation pay. If the placement is successful, we will make every effort to offer permanent employment after that.

Email: Editor Lisa Gervais at editor@thehighlander.ca

Deadline for application: Feb. 16 at 5 p.m.

MUNICIPALITY OF HIGHLANDS EAST Yours to Explore highlandseast.ca

The Municipality of Highlands East
Is Currently Seeking A

Temporary, General Equipment Operator
(Temporary to Cover Medical Leave)
Public Works Department

Current Rate of Pay per CUPE Local 4416 Collective Agreement:
$30.05/ hour

40 Hours per week, Monday – Friday

Overtime required some evenings and weekends subject to weather events.
Position to commence as soon as possible and duration to be determined.

A copy of the detailed job posting, and description are available upon request or on the Highlands East website at www.highlandseast.ca

If you are interested in joining our dedicated team of municipal professionals, applications **clearly marked "Application – Temporary, General Equipment Operator"** may be submitted on or before 12:00 p.m, Tuesday, February 17th, 2025 via email, mail, in person, or fax. Interested applicants may submit their resume, including references, in confidence to:

Tracy Vader, HR/Payroll Coordinator
Municipality of Highlands East
P.O. Box 295, 2249 Loop Road
Wilberforce, ON K0L 3C0
E-Mail: humanresources@highlandseast.ca

We thank all applicants for their interest but only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The Municipality of Highlands East is an equal opportunity employer. Applicants requiring accommodation are asked to contact the HR/Payroll Coordinator.

In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the information gathered will be used solely for candidate selection purposes only. Questions about this collection should be directed to Tracy Vader, HR/Payroll Coordinator.

ALGONQUIN FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

Administrative Assistant – Dorset Health Hub
Full-time, Permanent

We are seeking a full-time, permanent **Administrative Assistant** at the Nurse Practitioner Wellness Hub in Dorset. Come and join a highly skilled team and work to support primary care access and attachment in the Dorset community in a beautiful setting.

This role will provide administrative and receptionist duties to the Nurse Practitioner Wellness Hub; as well as completely support the day-to-day operations as required to provide caring, compassionate, and timely patient-centered care.

This position requires:

- Previous office and administration experience, in health care setting
- Completion of education and training in medical office management will be considered in lieu of experience
- Good working knowledge of medical electronic health records (Telus PSS suites preferred) and common computer programs, including word processing, email and spreadsheets
- Previous experience in managing multiple health care providers schedules, office operations and coordination of services
- Asset if experience in autoclaving, supply ordering for office, public health, and laboratory services; in addition to coordination of these services

Knowledge & Skill:

- Excellent communication skills including the ability to converse on a one-to-one basis using diplomatic language, discuss a variety of job-related topics, ability to respond to difficult questions, and the ability to speak, interact and provide information to persons of various social, cultural, economic and educational backgrounds
- The ability to use sound judgment, and initiate action that maintains safety, security, and dignity for all parties
- Demonstrates ability to multi-task while providing consistent high-quality work
- Ability to work in a manner that exemplifies the core values of the Algonquin Family Health Team
- Ability to be a team member and work to deliver health care services to the full scope of practice of all employees

Compensation including excellent group health and pension benefits plan.

To apply, please submit your resume with a cover letter to Donna Hildebrand at donna.hildebrand@algonquinfht.ca by February 20th, 2026.

All applications will be handled in strict confidence. We thank all applicants but only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

Highlander classifieds

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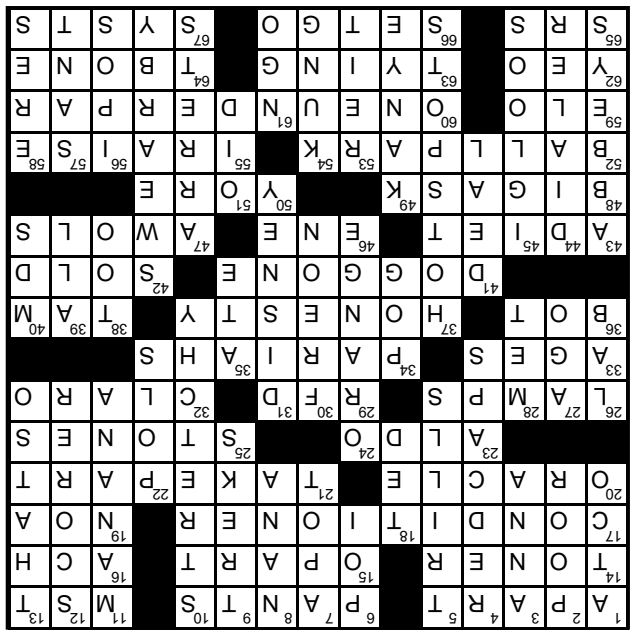

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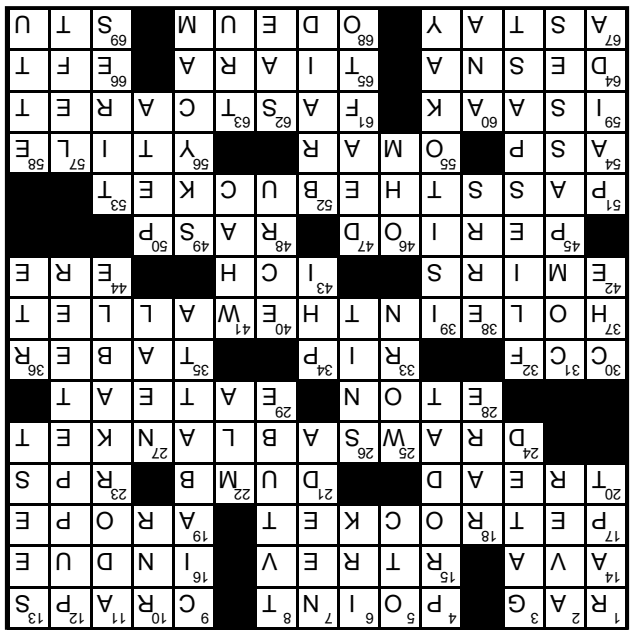

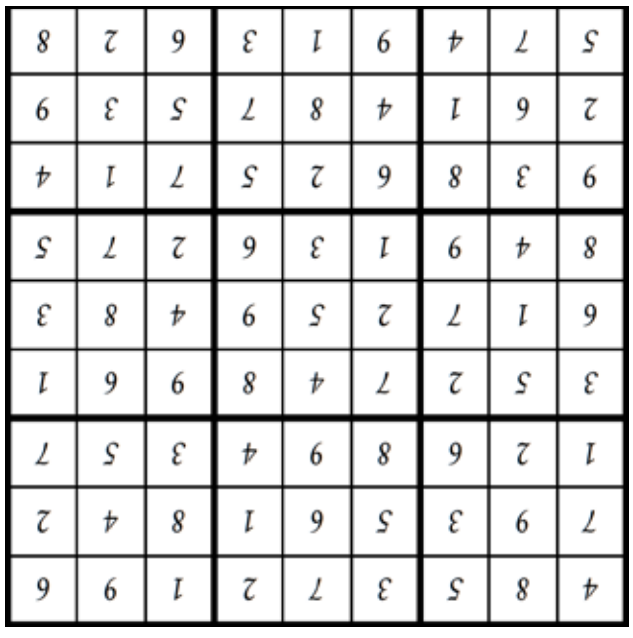

OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Ingrid Krause

Ingrid Krause, of Haliburton County passed away suddenly, Saturday, January 31st, at the age of 84. Leaving behind a life rooted in love, patience, and quiet strength.

Ingrid was a devoted mother to Babette (Rob), Claudia and Ralf (Jen), a cherished grandmother to Trevor, Cassandra (Paulie) and Alyssa (Tim), Brandon, Aaron, Eric, Cailyn, Kiera, Christian and Hayley and a proud great-grandmother to Nate, Cali, Juniper. Ingrid is survived by her sisters Brunhild and Gisela as well as nieces and nephews: Petra, Andrea, Micheal, Svenja, Simon, Fabian (and extended family). Her family was the center of her world, and her love showed up in a thousand small, steady ways listening, caring, and always being present.

She was also a passionate gardener. Ingrid found joy with her hands in the soil, nurturing life from the ground up. Her gardens were reflections of who she was: thoughtful, resilient, and beautiful in their simplicity. Many will remember her surrounded by flowers, tending carefully, finding peace outdoors.

Ingrid's legacy lives on through the generations she helped raise, the values she passed down, and the quiet kindness she shared with everyone who knew her. She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

It was Ingrid's wish for cremation and a celebration of her life to take place at a later date.

Memorial Donations to Basil on behalf of Haliburton Micro Meadows would be appreciated by the family and can be e-transferred to haliburtonmm@gmail.com.

Arrangements entrusted through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

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RENT WANTED

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HELP WANTED

The Corporation of the County of Haliburton Requires an IT Operations Manager

Reporting to the Director of Information Technology (IT), the IT Operations Manager is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day delivery of IT services and infrastructure for the County and partner municipalities. This position provides operational leadership to ensure reliable, efficient, and customer-focused IT service delivery across multiple sites.

The successful applicant will possess post-secondary education in IT or a related discipline and five (5) years of progressive experience in IT operations, including experience supporting both user-facing services and back-end systems or infrastructure. Experience in a municipal or public-sector environment is considered an asset. A valid G driver's licence and reliable personal vehicle are required.

Visit our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers for a more detailed posting and job description.

Please forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than **Friday February 13, 2026, at 4:30pm**.

We thank all who apply for this position; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The County of Haliburton is an equal opportunity employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details.

In accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act,* the information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of job selection.

Township of Algonquin Highlands
Parks, Recreation and Trails Department

We are currently accepting resumes for the following positions:

Dorset Tower Attendant
Lead Swim Instructor
Assistant Swim Instructor
Seasonal Student Trail Technician
Seasonal Trails Office Attendant
Stewardship Youth Ranger Team Lead
Stewardship Youth Rangers

Visit our website at: www.algonquinhighlands.ca for the complete job description.

Qualified candidates are invited to submit a cover letter and resume by **3:00 p.m. on Friday, February 13, 2026** to:

Dawn Mugford-Guay
Human Resources Coordinator
Township of Algonquin Highlands
1123 North Shore Road
Algonquin Highlands, ON K0M 1S0
Email: dmugfordguay@algonquinhighlands.ca

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Last remaining unit #9 – 1066 Sq.Ft. Rent is $12/ Sq. Ft. & Includes TMI And Just Pay Own Utilities +HST. For more information please call Mike Guerra at Re/Max Hallmark Chay Realty @ 705-435-5556 or 416-592-0183

Highlander puzzles

Alien Invasion

by Barbara Olson
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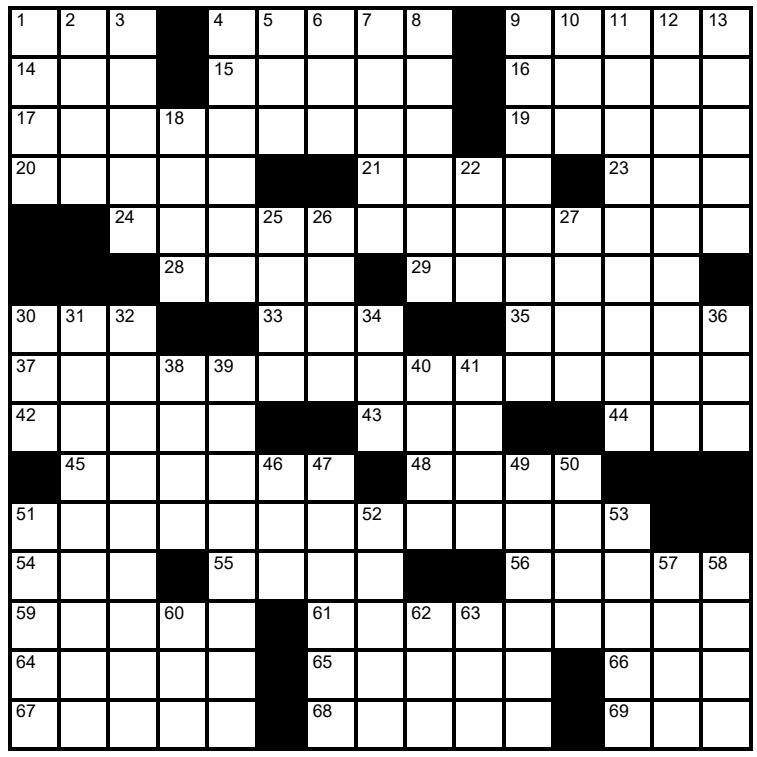

Across

1 Bit of Cinderella's attire
4 Indicate, with "at"
9 Casino dice game
14 "Selma" director DuVernay
15 Abbot's address: Abbr.
16 ___ course (at the right time)
17 Toy for a young astronaut?
19 Soap-on-___
20 Getaway car evidence, maybe
21 Definitely no Einstein
23 Rapid rotation meas.
24 Sketches one's bed cover?
28 Men's pricey shirt brand
29 Emphatic "dig in!"
30 NDP, pre-1961
33 Tombstone letters
35 Alberta town famous for its corn
37 Explanation for losing money?
42 Islamic honchos
43 First person in Frankfurt?
44 Poetic palindrome
45 The end of the line, often
48 Gollum's voice, e.g.
51 Command to a crewmate on a sinking ship?
54 Adder kin
55 "The Rubaiyat" poet Khayyam
56 4-point Scrabble piece
59 "Wicked Game" singer Chris
61 Tracy Chapman song about a hastily-written insertion mark?
64 Dnieper tributary near Kiev
65 Half a crown
66 Bog baby
67 Call for ___ of proceedings (halt legal charges)
68 Ancient Greek theatre
69 "Disco" dude on "The Simpsons"

Down

1 Glued to
2 State with confidence
3 Enclosed, as an estate
4 Use a stick to stoke
5 Available sans scrip
6 Nettle
7 "We ___ Little Christmas" (Johnny Mathis song)
8 Old "idiot box"component
9 Panini bread
10 Vacay benefit, for short
11 Cute in a nerdy way
12 "The Muppets" worker with a hand in the action?
13 "Thou ___ we are not all alone unhappy": Shak.
18 Hard to come by
22 Prov. parliamentarian
25 Ratty-looking
26 Nose-out-of joint mood
27 1963 Best Actress Patricia
30 "SNL" comedian Michael
31 Navigational devices
32 Zips by
34 Upsilon follower
36 Road map line: Abbr.
38 Messes up
39 "May I?"
40 Almond-coloured
41 ___-A-Mole
46 Electrical unit
47 Unwilling to hear
49 Drone footage aid
50 Animal protection grp.
51 ___ visit (dropped in)
52 Challah bread feature
53 Becomes weary
57 Took off
58 "And you?", to Caesar
60 "Fifty Shades of Grey" heroine
62 Ed.'s request
63 Capote, to friends

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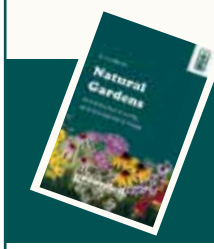

For a free guide to natural gardens in Haliburton County, visit groundedgardens.ca.

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